

# NTT INDYCAR SERIES

## News Conference

Wednesday, January 10, 2024

### Josef Newgarden

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome to the start of Content Days for the NTT INDYCAR Series looking ahead to the 2024 season which will be here before you know it. Leading off with the current and reigning Indianapolis 500 champion, Josef Newgarden. We're with the driver of the No. 2 Team Penske Chevrolet, beginning his 13th season in the NTT INDYCAR Series, 29 career wins and counting.

You're leading us off, so make it good. Good morning.

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Good morning. Feeling really good. Excited to be here. Excited to get going again. We're always busy. It's funny, people always ask us what we're doing after the season finale. They just assume we're sitting around waiting until March, but on the team side we've been very busy and personally it's been very busy. I'm ready for the full thing. I can't wait to get to St. Pete and really get into the flow. Should be exciting.

**Q. I know last night you had a chance to spend time with some executives. What are some of the things they talked about with the drivers and people for 2024? What are some of the things that you feel positive about, maybe some areas that you see that need some work?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Genuinely I feel really positive about a lot of things. It's been probably a tougher off-season for cadence and news, but I really think 2024 can be another great step for us in the INDYCAR Series.

We have so many positive things going on, so I'm kind of excited about the season finally getting here and getting into the swing of it. It helps when we get back to the track because we just have a great racing product, too.

I think it's easy to forget about it sometimes when we leave the track, but when we're in racing, it's easy to talk about our competition level, and I think that the level of racing that we have in this series.

It was a good check-in last night. I think the Penske Entertainment folks are trying to do a good job of staying

engaged with everybody in the series so that we're understanding where they're going and where the plan is.

But there is a lot of good things on the horizon. Nothing that I'm going to get into specifically. Obviously the hybrid is probably the most exciting component of this year, so we're all still in full prep for that, trying to understand exactly how we're going to tackle that post-Indianapolis. I think that's probably the No. 1 topic right now.

**Q. I imagine probably everyone is wondering, is Bus Bros going to continue in 2024?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Who knows. I don't know. Bus Bros, right now, they're taking a long nap. But you just never know with those guys. Anything is possible.

Not at the moment. They are definitely out of the game.

But the future, I don't know what that's going to hold.

**Q. I know there's been some stuff written about you and Bryan splitting and him going to create another content business. Are you involved in any way in some sort of media marketing venture right now or are you kind of putting your sights on the racing side right now?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Not at the moment for me. I pared down this off-season a lot of things, which I think has been productive personally. I've tried to refocus my task list and really my priorities, and from that standpoint, it's been really, really positive. I'm trying to get back to some of the core things that -- not that I wasn't working on my core objectives in the past or last year, but I think there was definitely room for improvement and trying to create some better focus in areas.

That was really my intentions by some of these changes in the off-season. In a lot of ways, just to be transparent, I want to get back to loving this. Not that I didn't love it in the past, but I think when you get bogged down by too much, then sometimes the joy slips away.

I'm excited to get back to why I started doing this, why I started going racing. Getting back to the track, working on

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race cars and understanding how we can be faster than everybody, that's what I care about the most, so that's what I'm really focused on.

**Q. How taxing have these last four years been since your last championship? We've talked on and off about winning, being so close, you have three years in a row of being runner-up in the championship. I know you're someone who cares about this as much as anyone and puts as much work into all of this in the off-season, in season to accomplish what you've done in the last decade. Can you tell us a little bit about the process of feeling like you needed to pare stuff down and recenter and refocus yourself going into 2024?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, I think what I'm talking about is really just life. I think we all go through it at different stages. I'm at a different stage now in my career than when I was a rookie in 2012. I'm fortunate enough to be at this stage in my career. I'm most thankful to just have had all this time in INDYCAR. It's going to be my 13th year.

I feel very different than 13 years ago when I first started, and I'm trying to understand what's probably best for me at this stage in my career, and I think getting back to some simplicity would be good for me.

It happens in life where everything can become complicated, regardless of what business you're in or what facet of life, if you want to start a family. Everybody in this room, we all can become too busy or too clouded maybe with ambitions, and I think for me, that was probably true in some respects.

So I'm trying to just find clarity on what is most important to me objective-wise, so I've gone through that process a little bit.

This sounds probably more grand than it is. It's simple things I would say have been taking place to try and implement some simplicity. But I'm excited. I think it'll bring me back to the core of what I do, and just happy to be here.

I want to go racing again and do a great job. Those three years finishing runner-up in the championship were tough. Those were very crushing. I would like to change the cycle on that for the future.

**Q. Looking at the schedule this year, thought about you immediately. Two new races at Milwaukee. Obviously you're the oval master. Then St. Louis under the lights this year. Talk about the oval side of the schedule coming up this season, which is**

**obviously a strong point.**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, always excited for new challenges. Milwaukee was great when we had it on the schedule. I'm excited to go back there. It'll be interesting to see how different it is.

What's it been, nearly eight, nine years since we've been there? So it should be different in some respects. The car is going to be different.

I think Gateway under the lights for me is just a joy. Everybody is going to be happy about that. Should be a phenomenal race. The aero package is going to be different, so that's going to change the whole sort of look and feel of that.

I like it. I like change. There's a lot of exciting things that are going to be happening throughout the year. Some of these tracks and events are going to be different. When the hybrid comes online middle of the year, that's going to add a whole new dynamic, which I personally think is exciting.

When you show up to go racing, you know that certain things are going to be put in front of you challenge-wise. I think that's going to be a challenge for everybody. I think for us, we've got to figure out how to maximize the beginning of the season, and then when there's a change, how are we going to maximize the rest of it. That's going to be pretty cool.

Yeah, the ovals will be no doubt a highlight probably, but I want to be good everywhere. I think that's probably the most important thing I would say is we've got to be strong everywhere if we want to win the championship.

**Q. I know you're as competitive as they come. You're now a two-time champion, Indy 500 champion, Long Beach winner. What drives Josef Newgarden now? What's the next goal you're trying to eclipse? When you get out of bed in the morning, what keeps that drive going for you?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: You know, when it comes to racing, it's still -- for me, it's still the bottom line numbers. What's the ultimate results. I care about that stuff.

I think everybody that's in here does.

I don't know how you can be in racing and not care about just finding success every weekend you're at the track. That's why I show up. I know it's why our team shows up.

You talk to Roger Penske, he's more motivated than



anybody to win the 20th Indy 500. That's an unbelievable statement when you really think about it.

I'm the same way. I'm so thankful we were able to win an Indy 500 last year, but I'm thinking about the next one. How do we get a second one, and if we're lucky enough to get a second one, how do we get a third, and if we can get a third, how do we get a fourth. It's a never-ending process of trying to stack success on to one another. That's what motivates me.

The tough part about it, and I think the easy way to stay motivated, is it's always changing. Just because we were successful one year and we figured out a formula to win the 500 last year, that does not guarantee the same formula next season, and we see that time and time again. There's always a different challenge in front of us, and we're going to have to find a new way and a new path, so that also motivates me. I enjoy the new challenge that we're always coming up against.

This year is still a little bit of an unknown. We'll see what happens.

**Q. Since you've been with Team Penske, obviously you guys didn't win the INDYCAR Championship last year, but you won the 500, Will won the championship the year before, and you look at the NASCAR side, Joey and Ryan the last two years won the championship. Is the morale around Team Penske and the culture in general as good as it's ever been since you've been there?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Oh, no doubt. I don't know what it was like pre-my time, but I think the collaboration has never been greater in our team across the board. We're really trying to leverage every person, every position that we have across motorsports to elevate the whole thing.

It was really great to see Ryan seal the championship this year. I think that is going to be a big catalyst for him as an individual, but it's also a continuing catalyst for our team.

That's a big deal. They went back-to-back in the NASCAR championship, which is not easy to do.

On our side, we won the Indianapolis 500, which had been a thorn for the last three, four years. You think about that, too, we go -- at Team Penske we go three or four years without finding Victory Lane, and that's deemed unacceptable.

There's just a standard that we definitely live by, and you've got to love it. You've got to love living by that standard if you're here, and I think pretty much everybody

does.

But yeah, the morale and the excitement -- I've never seen it better. I don't think it was ever bad, but I've definitely never seen it better.

**Q. Tough question for you to answer, but we're at the start of a season, and it's a reflective time in some respects, too. You've stacked wins here incredibly over the last seven years, and you're kind of at the cusp of top 10 in all time -- right ahead of you now, two wins more is Helio, Dario, PT. You're starting to get in pretty tough air. Do you ever take a moment and say, how has this happened so quickly, and wow? Do you ever have those kind of moments?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Probably more so than ever last year. The 500 I think takes you back. It really does. For me personally, it was just a moment of reflection when you're able to -- I could get emotional thinking about that race. How could you not? It's just this peak that seems impossible, especially when you've been living and breathing it for 12 years and it not happening.

That has set me back more than anything in my career.

As far as the rest of it, I don't think people like my answer, but it's just not good enough. Roger always says, and I love when he says this, he says, good enough is not good enough, and that's kind of how I feel about our results. We need to do a little bit better.

**Q. They changed his parking spot at Indy to 19 almost immediately after the checkered flag, that he's now got to get 20. Is that what you're talking about? It's just like it's what's next is next?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: 20 is on the board. That's what we're looking at right now. When you go to the shop and we talk about it, we're thinking about Indianapolis first, and it's everything else right behind it, absolutely.

**Q. What do you need to work on as a driver to be better in '24 than you were in '23?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, great question. Yeah, everything. I don't think it'll come down to one or two ingredients. We know where we fell short probably as a group. Me personally, I think I was also layered into some of that. The weaknesses on the road and street courses, there's always things that you can be doing better, and certainly for me qualifying is probably going to be the No. 1 thing on my board that needs to improve.

I think it goes deeper than just at the track, though. It's



where are you at from a preparation standpoint. I'm really looking at that a lot this off-season and what I'm going to be bringing into each weekend that we go to.

So just my own personal process even before I show up and start working with the team, I think those are all areas I can be better at.

And I guess just to round it back up, it's not going to be one thing. It's always a combination of a lot of little things that you've just got to improve and be a bit better than last year. I'm looking at everything. The personal side is big, and I think as a team, too, we're working really hard to just be better in all areas that we weren't last year.

**Q. I wanted to ask about the Million Dollar Challenge. What do you make of it? The timing of it is kind of puzzling because it's not an exhibition pre-season thing. What do you make of that?**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: Yeah, the event at Thermal, correct? I've got to say I'm kind of excited about it. We were talking about it last night, too. This is one of the things we were chatting about.

You see this across the board in motorsports, whether it's the event at the Coliseum that NASCAR put on or it's these other trials. I think for us, it'll be a great exhibition race. In a lot of ways it's made for TV, which is in a lot of ways great.

I think not everybody lives in Palm Springs, California, but this is one of these events that can be just a net positive. Let's run it; let's see how it goes. There's no guarantees it'll be perfect or well-received, but there's also a possibility that it's super well-received.

I think it's an exciting event. Obviously there's a lot of money to be won, which is motivating for everybody.

But I think more than anything, there's just the motivation that you want to be top of the pack. Even some speed at Thermal matters everywhere else, so I think for us it's going to be important to be fast there, and let's see how it goes. I think it'll be a fun challenge, really fun challenge for everybody, and we'll see how it's received.

**Q. Do you worry about how hard people are going to be racing that early in the season? You don't want to tear up equipment at a non-points race.**

JOSEF NEWGARDEN: No, not at all, as far as my concern for it.

You have to understand, every event you show up to, you

have to be putting in the maximum effort without going over the limit. That is our challenge every single time.

What are we going to do when we go to Indianapolis in April to test? You're going to be putting the car to the limit, and of course you don't want to wreck the car, but that's always the challenge we have. I think that's a little bit irrelevant. At Thermal you can push the car to the limit. It is our job to do that and try and find performance and win a race.

Accidents happen, too; if we get into an accident, we'll work with it going into the next race. That's not abnormal to what we do.

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